

Faster, Better, Cheaper Documents for NASA Proposals at the Jet Propulsion Lab

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Science missions to outer space, and the documentation that supports them, have become faster, better, and cheaper. At the Jet Propulsion Lab, the Advanced Projects Design Team (“Team X”) now produces proposal and pre-project studies in a tenth the time and for half the cost of conventional preparers. Team X is composed of specialists from 15 different technical divisions, each representing a particular element of a mission, like propulsion and cost. During each 3-hour design session, each specialty works on a Power Mac with two networked tools—a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and a Microsoft Word document. The Word document is linked in Word’s publish-and-subscribe feature: changes to each specialist’s document automatically update the master document that becomes the report delivered to the customer. Depending on the needs of the customer, the Word document may be structured as a proposal, giving the customer a head-start in the proposal writing process.